Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction

Working paper submitted by the Russian Federation

1. The establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as called for in the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, remains on the agenda of the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and efforts should be redoubled to achieve progress in this direction.

2. The Russian Federation, as a co-sponsor, reaffirms its commitment to the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. We assume that the mandate of the 2010 action plan is basically valid and that the convening of a Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains a relevant, worthwhile and achievable goal in the context of the 1995 resolution.

3. Thorough preparation is essential in order to ensure a successful outcome of this event. The main objective of the preparatory process is to achieve agreement on the organizational modalities of the Conference, including drafts of its agenda, rules of procedure and outcome document, which would outline a way towards the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. All substantive decisions during the preparatory process and at the Conference itself should be taken by consensus.

4. Preparatory meetings should preferably be attended by all States of the region and conducted on a regular basis as frequently as needed. A venue of such meetings might be either Geneva/Glion in Switzerland, as during the previous review cycle, in accordance with the kind offer of the Swiss authorities, or in Cairo. In the latter case, preparatory meetings could be convened back-to-back with the sessions of the League of Arab States Committee of Senior Officials in order to ensure high representation of the regional States in terms of level and number of participants. The level of directors of the respective ministry of foreign affairs departments is advisable for preparatory meetings. The Russian Federation is ready to arrange one or two meetings in Moscow if countries of the region express interest in that.

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5. While enough time should be provided for preparation of the Conference, this process cannot last indefinitely. We should aim to hold this event well before the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

6. The preparatory process should be organized in the most effective way and be well structured. Any progress in discussion needs to be properly recorded. It is preferable to arrange this process in accordance with an agreed programme of work.

7. The agenda of the Conference should provide an opportunity for an open, comprehensive and focused discussion on the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, in the interest of consensus, it is advisable to devote one session of the Conference to several specific aspects of regional security. Those items should be within the context of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and be agreed by the States of the region in advance.

8. The role of facilitator may be very helpful for the success of the preparatory process and the Conference. However, the formal appointment of a special representative seems to be not an easy task. In the absence of such a person at this stage, the relevant organizational functions could be performed by a United Nations representative authorized by the Secretary-General. The Russian Federation would be ready to closely cooperate with him or her.

9. Based on the experience of the previous review cycle, due consideration should be given to the financial aspects of the preparation and holding of the Conference. Therefore, assistance by donors from interested countries of the region and beyond is welcomed.

10. We propose to hold the first preparatory meeting in the near future. The precise date and venue could be discussed and agreed upon at the earliest opportunity.